Newsletter of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh
New Series Volume 11 Number 9 November 2014

FIELD OUTING: Sunday, 23rd November 2014: Narepally Reserve Forest. Meeting point: Punjagutta (opp. Mangatrai Pearls), 6.00AM.

Located on the Warangal Highway near Ghatkesar, the Narepally Reserve Forest is around 12 km from Uppal crossroads. This is a new birding location for us, and hence we do not have any prior information about the birds that may be sighted here. However, a new location always holds promise, and we are hopeful of good birding at Narepally. We may also later explore some nearby lakes if time permits. This will be a half-day trip. For further details and to co-ordinate, please contact Ms Surekha Aitabathula (99490-38532).

INDOOR MEETING: Screening of 2 documentary films
Tuesday, 25th November 2014, 6.30PM: Goethe-zentrum Hyderabad, 20 Journalist's Colony, Road No. 3, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500 034. (For directions, please contact 94905-09251 or 040-65526443/23350040)

(1) Film on the life of Dr. Salim Ali, the 'Birdman of India'. (2) Film on the effort to protect the Amur Falcon from being killed *en masse* along their migration route.

Trip Report – Vanasthalipuram National Park, 21st September 2014

Amritha Lawrence

Photo: Aishwarya Mishra

The alarm rang at 05.30 AM, waking me from my dreamless sleep and initially making me turn my wheels to think of the event that needed my attention at this hour. But then, as the hammer hits the hot iron, I remembered that it was the day I was going out for another birding trip to the Vanasthalipuram National Park, to get some candid shots of birds and add to my knowledge about them. At about 06.00 AM my father and I dropped our four-legged family member at our factory and then proceeded towards the park to start our day amidst the nature I have grown to love. On our way there, we picked up two more birders, Mr Chowdhari and Ms Anjali, then hit the gas to take us straight to the park.

As I sat in the back seat of the car, holding my camera in one hand, one of my ear pieces playing soft music in my ears, I was already looking for something that would catch my eye, unaware of the conversation going on in the car.

At about 06.45 AM we reached the spot and noticed that the other members who had come for this trip were already there waiting for us. The only sad part was that I had already eaten all of the sandwiches my father made for this trip, but it served as a great snack to start off the long walk with. Initially we entered the park and thought of going in a single group but as we approached an intersection, Mr Gubbala Ramakrishna Rao, Forest Utilization Officer with the Telangana Forest Department, who is also a life member of BSAP, suggested that we split in groups so that we could cover all the areas of the park and later meet up near the watch tower.

I went forward following the call of the peacocks with a group of five birders. Our initial idea was to spot birds but instead, we ourselves became exhibits to the monkeys and the deer in the park. After walking for a while, we spotted a Shikra sitting on a tree top. It looked to me like he was waiting for us to come and click his pictures, but his patience was limited; possibly, something even more interesting may have caught his attention, making him leave us.

After getting a few so-so shots of the Shikra, we moved forward hoping that we could find some more interesting sightings. I was eager to click some amazing long distance pictures but wherever we went, it seemed like people who preceded us down the path had already sent the animals and birds away! So we were back to enjoying the company of one another, and also the monkeys who would come closer on a tree to watch us making our moves.

Suddenly I spotted a black buck crossing our way and, let me tell you, it was the most beautiful thing I have ever seen, because:

1. It reminded me of how it feels like to be free of everything.
2. In the midst of nature, this freedom lives.

In a flash I saw it leaping away from us. On our way ahead, I was beginning to get bored as we didn't find many birds. Somewhere on the way, our attention shifted from birds and deer to insects as we started finding the red velvet ones; the first one cooperated with me and gave me some very good poses but the second one looked like he wanted to be left alone.

As we proceeded, we finally met up with the others as they reached the topmost view point of the park. One of our members found the horn of a *Chausingha*. Hoping that we could take it, we looked at our guide, only to be told 'no'. But all in all, it was a good trip with a collective sighting of around 50 species of birds.

After having walked the trail of about 4.5 kilometers up to the watch tower, the thought of walking back all the way to the waiting breakfast looked like an herculean task, but the wise men made our day - a bus was arranged to take us back to the entrance where the Curator received us with a warm welcome and hosted the breakfast.

We had a lovely spread of South Indian breakfast, followed by a cup of Hyderabadi *chai*. Mr Shafaat Ulla, on behalf of all of us, thanked the Curator and his team, and requested him to give us a brief history of the Park.

We were then told that during the Nizam rule, the area was known as the *Shikar* and the royals came to hunt blackbucks which were found in large numbers. Later, the park was divided into three zones, out of which only one was open to the public for a bus safari. We were also informed about the butterfly park that was opened recently.

A few of us wanted to go out to the park and see some butterflies. Hoping that we might get some macro shots, one of my friends came prepared with his reverse lens. Sadly for him, it was a restricted enclosure, but luckily me I had my telephoto lens with me and got some beautiful close ups of the butterflies from a distance. I also spotted a yellow wagtail sitting at the corner of the water body, quenching his thirst and throwing an occasional glance at our direction.

By now, it was around 11.15 AM, and we were approaching the end of our trip. As we gathered around, some of the old members of the group shared their sightings, and a few prior experiences from earlier trips. After making plans for the next trip, at around 11.30 AM, we all bade goodbye and went our separate ways.

Given below is the list of the birds spotted in the Park:

Sl. No	Species Status	Common Name	Scientific Name
1	R	Glossy Ibis	*Plegadis falcinellus*
2	RM	Intermediate Egret	*Mesophoyx intermedia*
3	RM	Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*
4	RM	Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus ibis*
5	R	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*
6	R	White-breasted Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*
7	R	Black Kite	*Milvus migrans*
8	R	Shikra	*Accipiter badius*
9	R	Grey Francolin	*Francolinus pondicerianus*
10	R	Indian Peafowl	*Pavo cristatus*

11	R	Indian House Crow	*Corvus splendens*
12	R	Jungle Crow	*Corvus macrorhynchos*
13	R	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*
14	R	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*
15	R	Rose-ringed Parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*
16	R	Common Myna	*Acridotheres tristis*
17	R	Indian Roller	*Coracias benghalensis*
18	R	Green Bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*
19	RM	Red-rumped Swallow	*Hirundo daurica*
20	RM	Barn Swallow	*Hirundo rustica*
21	R	White-headed Babbler	*Turdoides affinis*
22	R	Indian Robin	*Saxicoloides fulicata*
23	RM	Common Stonechat	*Saxicola torquata*
24	R	Asian Koel	*Eudynamys scolopacea*
25	R	Greater Coucal	*Centropus sinensis*
26	R	House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*
28	R	Spotted Dove	*Streptopelia chinensis*
29	R	Laughing Dove	*Streptopelia senegalensis*
30	R	Eurasian Collared Dove	*Streptopelia decaocto*
31	R	Ashy Prinia	*Prinia socialis*
32	R	Common Tailorbird	*Orthotomus sutorius*
33	R	Indian Grey Hornbill	*Ocyceros birostris*
34	R	Rufous Treepie	*Dendrocitta vagabunda*
35	R	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	*Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*
36	RM	Asian Paradise-flycatcher	*Terpsiphone paradisi*
37	R	Purple-rumped Sunbird	*Nectarinia zeylonica*
38	R	Pied Bushchat	*Saxicola caprata*
39	R	Common Hawk Cuckoo	*Hierococcyx varius*
40	R	Indian Thick-Knee	*Burhinus oedicnemus indicus*
41	RM	Great Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax carbo*
42	RM	Asian Brown Flycatcher	*Muscicapa dauurica*
43	R	Wire-tailed Swallow	*Hirundo smithii*
44	RM	Indian Spot-billed Duck	*Anas poecilorhyncha*
45	R	Large Grey Babbler	*Turdoides malcolmi*
46	R	White-naped Woodpecker	*Chrysocolaptes festivus*
47	R	Blue faced Malkoha	*Phaenicophaeus viridirostris*
48	R	Yellow Wagtail	*Motacilla flava*

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BIRDING IN THE RAIN!

Trip Report – Evening trip to Medchal Village, 25th October 2014

Text and photos: Humayun Taher

Common Kestrel

This was the third trip organized under the aegis of the BSAP Evening Birding initiative. This venture has become extremely popular and the attendance is growing steadily. The site this time was chosen with a specific object in mind. We decided to select places where the birds too are crepuscular or nocturnal. There is, in fact, little point in going on evening jaunts when all we get to see are the birds of the daytime, in evening light! We found such a place when Lawrence informed us that there are several resident owls and nightjars at a farm belonging to one of his friends. Incidentally, the owner of the farm was also part of our group that day, and very pleasant it was too.

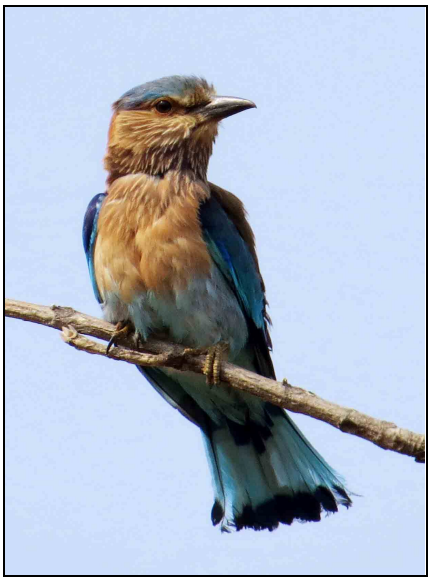
What was not pleasant (to some of the members) was the weather. The clouds had been threatening all morning and the afternoon was no different. The rain gods were in belligerent mood and kept all of us on our toes. This meant that very few of us could get decent photographs. The cameras remained, for the most part, inside their watertight bags and several of the binoculars too were similarly protected. Being fortunate enough to possess a pair of "waterproof" bins, I, along with a couple of other members who had similarly protected optics, was able to use them most of the time. I must admit, though, that the driving rain did nothing to dampen the enthusiasm of the birders.

Black-shouldered Kite

A hovering Black-shouldered Kite drew everyone's attention. The bird was on the hunt and had obviously seen something interesting in the grass. From the fact that it spent almost 30 seconds in the same spot, I was inclined to think that it had spotted a fat mouse or a large lizard; a small locust or grasshopper would not have warranted such an expenditure of energy on the part of the bird. But we were unable to decide what it was and eventually, the bird moved off. Somewhat disappointed that the hunt ended in failure, a disappointment that I am sure even the Kite felt, we now started to look at the other denizens. A small female Kestrel flew past; this little migrant generally arrives on our shores during this period so I was not really surprised to see this one. The other members too were thrilled to see this little falcon. Although it did not give us a display of its prowess as a helicopter, still it was nice to know that they had arrived.

The rain started up again and drove the whole group to shelter under a passing shed. The cameras and binoculars were carefully wrapped up again and we waited for the heavy rain to stop so that we could venture out. A few minutes later however, it tapered off to a thin drizzle and I started reminiscing about rainy-day-birding in the early days, when the birders would venture forth armed with macintoshes and stout gum-boots, plastic bags carefully draped over our ancient binoculars. Fired by this eulogy, the rest of the group decided that a few drops would not stop the determined birders; if the birds were out, so too would the birders be!

And so, having decided that we were going to have a moist outing, we set off through the water-logged grass and shrubs, shaking down even more water onto our already soaking trousers. Jeans take a long time to dry out; I was thinking that a lot of clothes-lines would be occupied tonight!



Indian Roller

But the discomfort was worth it, as we saw some interesting sightings. A trio of rather bedraggled Indian Rollers sat forlornly on a tree. The rain had soaked their beautiful plumage to an extent where the birds looked thoroughly miserable. The Black Drongos, however, seemed to be of the same mind as the twitchers and were out enjoying the showers. There they went, hawking insects through the thin drizzle.

Black Drongo

A quartet of Indian Golden Orioles seemed to enjoy the weather just as much as the Drongos; they too were having a good time flitting about in the branches of a noble old eucalyptus tree. A Black-headed Cuckoo-shrike joined them for a quick game, but the Orioles were insistent that they could not receive visitors at the moment, so the Cuckoo-shrike quickly retired.

Indian Golden Oriole

A few little Sunbirds were twittering away in the nearby shrubbery, and so too was the little *darzee* of the avian world, the Tailorbird. He must be having a hard time, stitching in this weather, I thought.

Common Tailorbird

While I was searching for the Tailorbird in the dense shrubbery from which it was calling, I heard the far-away whistle of the Rain Quail. That "*worlee-hee*" call is very distinctive and not to be mistaken for anything else. Straining my ears, I managed to make out that the bird was calling from a considerable distance away, though still close enough to be clearly audible. This species is regularly seen during the months following the rains, which makes their name very apt indeed, and I was not surprised to hear the call. As audible as it was, the elusive quail lived up to its reputation and remained vocal but invisible!

Prasad spotted a raptor flying into a small leafy *neem* tree; most probably it was a Shikra. We continued along the trail, noting a great number of the little Green Bee-eaters and a few Indian Robins. A couple of Spotted Doves were also seen enjoying the rain, sitting on a telegraph wire.

What I found interesting is the complete lack of Munias in this area. We saw several House Sparrows, but not a single Munia. The habitat was very suitable indeed, and there was no lack of food, given the grain fields around. So why were they absent? We discussed the matter at length and eventually decided that it was the rain that was keeping them at bay. The weather gods chose this moment to up the tempo of the drizzle a bit, and we therefore decided to retreat before we got caught in a proper downpour. So we started back, encountering along the way a few more birds like the White-bellied Drongo and Pied Bushchat.

Pied Bushchat

Having reached the shelter of the farmhouse, we refreshed ourselves with steaming cups of tea. While partaking of this welcome fluid, we discussed the day and the birds seen. But we were still missing the nocturnal creatures. No owls were to be seen or heard, nor were there any nightjars. Meantime, some of the group members went out to look at an abandoned woodpecker nest. We were interested to note that the bird had selected a hollow bamboo shed support for this purpose. Bamboo is notoriously tough to drill holes in, but if the work has already been done, the hollow stem is an admirable place for a nest. No doubt the woodpecker thought so too and, having discovered this hollow pole, it successfully nested and raised a brood too. Our host told us that he had monitored the nest for the entire duration, and he narrated some interesting facts about the entire nesting cycle of the birds.

Reflections on the nesting cycle of woodpeckers helped pass the time and before we realized it, it was dark. Suddenly, from very close by, came the loud chuckling call of the Common Indian Nightjar! Only a single bird was calling, but it was enough. I took out my powerful spotlight and the whole group hurried towards the place where the bird was calling. A thin drizzle was still falling, but it failed to wash out our enthusiasm. We reached the place and, flicking on the spotlight, scanned the area from top to bottom. But not a single feather of a nightjar was to be seen! To make matters worse, the bird stopped calling at that moment, and now we had no way of knowing whether it was still there or had already flown away. Amritha voiced the opinion that any self-respecting nightjar would long ago have made itself scarce, an opinion that I was unfortunately in agreement with.

So, disappointed that we were unable to see the nightjar, and with the rain once again beginning to descend in sheets, we reluctantly decided that the time had come to end this very interesting, if slightly moist, trip. And with a final tally of 41 species, birding in the rain had been an unqualified success. The only problem was the time it would take for us to get our jeans dry again!

The full list of species seen is given below:

	Status	Species	Scientific name	IUCN Status
1	R	Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*	
2	R	Eastern Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus coromandus*	
3	R	Indian Pond Heron	*Ardeola grayii*	
4	R	Black-winged Kite	*Elanus caeruleus*	
5	R	Indian Shikra	*Accipiter badius*	
6	M	Common Kestrel	*Falco tinnunculus*	
7	R	Grey Francolin	*Francolinus pondicerianus*	
8	R, M	Rain Quail	*Coturnix coromandelica*	
9	R	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*	
10	R	Rock Dove	*Columba livia intermedia*	
11	R	Laughing Dove	*Streptopelia senegalensis*	
12	R	Spotted Dove	*Streptopelia chinensis*	
13	R	Rose-ringed Parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*	
14	R	Southern Coucal	*Centropus sinensis*	
15	R	Asian Koel	*Eudynamys scolopacea*	
16	R	Spotted Owlet	*Athene brama*	

	Status	Species	Scientific name	IUCN Status
17	R	Indian Little Nightjar	*Caprimulgus asiaticus*	
18	R	Asian Palm-swift	*Cypsiurus balasiensis*	
19	R	White-breasted Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*	
20	R	Little Green Bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*	
21	R	Indian Roller	*Coracias benghalensis*	
22	R	Common Hoopoe	*Upupa epops*	
23	M	Black-headed Cuckooshrike	*Coracina melanoptera*	
24	R	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*	
25	R	Indian Black Robin	*Saxicoloides fulicatus fulicatus*	
26	R	Pied Bushchat	*Saxicola caprata bicolor*	
27	R	Large Grey Babbler	*Turdoides malcolmi*	
28	R	Yellow-billed Babbler	*Turdoides affinis*	
29	R	Ashy Prinia	*Prinia socialis*	
30	R	Common Tailorbird	*Orthotomus sutorius*	
31	R	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	*Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*	
32	R	Purple Sunbird	*Cinnyris asiaticus*	
33	R	Indian Silverbill	*Euodice malabarica*	
34	R	Scaly-breasted Munia	*Lonchura punctulata*	
35	R	House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*	
36	R	Common Myna	*Acridotheres tristis*	
37	R	Indian Golden Oriole	*Oriolus kundoo*	
38	R	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*	
39	R	White-bellied Drongo	*Dicrurus caerulescens*	
40	R	Rufous Treepie	*Dendrocitta vagabunda*	
41	R	House Crow	*Corvus splendens*	

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Bird Humour

(From Bangalore Times, 19-10-2013)

Report – Visit to ICFAI Business School campus, 2nd November 2014

Text: Anjali Pande; Photos: Abhishek Shroti

The ICFAI Business School campus on Shankarpalli Road was the birding destination on 2nd November 2014 for a small group from BSAP. At the urging of one of their teachers, Mr Shailendra Singh Bisht, the student members of 'Prakriti', the IBS Nature Club, had requested BSAP to talk to them about birding and do a morning walk on their campus. Accordingly, 5 of us (Humayun, Abhishek, Sathvik, Bindu and I) had spent the morning of 2nd November there, and around 30 young and enthusiastic budding management professionals were willing partners in this collaborative effort to discover bird life co-habiting their campus.

Cattle Egret

Beginning as a small walk with sightings of mostly common birds like Cattle Egrets and Blue Rock Pigeons, we started using the time also to interact with the students. It was a rather dull day with overcast skies, but soon enough, the spirit of trying to listen to calls and figuring out whether the bird is a "parrot" caught on. With discussions ranging from differences between "parrots" and "parakeets" to "how we need to become aware" it was an enjoyable as well as educating experience for all.

Rose-ringed Parakeet

Walking through small patches of Subabul and Bamboo plantation, we were told that there is a good reptilian population thriving around the campus. The loud choruses of Rose-ringed Parakeets calling from everywhere showed that this place was clearly a Parakeet kingdom. Within an hour, everyone in the group could identify Common Myna and Red-vented Bulbul.

Indian Grey Hornbill

Enjoying the excitement of sighting Indian Grey Hornbills, Green Bee-eaters and Purple Sunbirds, we took another direction to look at a small lake on the campus. Beautiful sights of preening Lesser Whistling-ducks greeted us.

Lesser Whistling-duck

Little Grebe

Indian Pond Heron

Little Grebe and Pond Heron were sighted and then a Brown Shrike appeared in the shrubs in the surrounding reeds, giving food for thought to some students who were interested in knowing more about bird migration.

The long birding walk culminated with a group photo in the company of many Scaly-breasted Munias busy in nest building right in the balconies of the ladies hostel.

Scaly-breasted Munia

Blue-tailed Bee-eater silhouette

For the BSAP this was a good investment for the future, because this one usefully-spent morning surely turned some future members of the corporate world green for life!

The full list of birds seen is given below:

	Status	Species	Scientific name	IUCN Status
1	R	Little Grebe	*Tachybaptus ruficollis*	
2	R	Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*	
3	R	Eastern Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus coromandus*	
4	R	Indian Pond-heron	*Ardeola grayii*	
5	R	Black-headed Ibis	*Threskiornis melanocephalus*	NT
6	R	Lesser Whistling-duck	*Dendrocygna javanica*	
7	R	Indian Spot-billed Duck	*Anas poecilorhyncha*	
8	R	Black Kite	*Milvus migrans*	
9	R	Indian Shikra	*Accipiter badius*	
10	M	Common Kestrel	*Falco tinnunculus*	
11	R	Grey Francolin	*Francolinus pondicerianus*	
12	R	White-breasted Waterhen	*Amaurornis phoenicurus*	
13	R	Eurasian Coot	*Fulica atra*	
14	R	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*	
15	R	Rock Dove	*Columba livia intermedia*	
16	R	Laughing Dove	*Streptopelia senegalensis*	
17	R	Spotted Dove	*Streptopelia chinensis*	
18	R	Rose-ringed Parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*	
19	R	Southern Coucal	*Centropus sinensis*	
20	R	Asian Koel	*Eudynamys scolopacea*	
21	R	Spotted Owlet	*Athene brama*	
22	R	House Swift	*Apus affinis*	
23	R	White-breasted Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*	
24	R	Little Green Bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*	
25	M	Blue-tailed Bee-eater	*Merops philippinus*	
26	R	Indian Grey Hornbill	*Tockus birostris*	
27	R,M	Red-rumped Swallow	*Hirundo daurica*	
28	R	White-browed Wagtail	*Motacilla maderaspatensis*	
29	R	Small Minivet	*Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*	
30	R	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*	
31	R	White-browed Bulbul	*Pycnonotus luteolus*	
32	M	Brown Shrike	*Lanius cristatus*	
33	R	Indian Black Robin	*Saxicoloides fulicatus fulicatus*	
34	R	Yellow-billed Babbler	*Turdoides affinis*	
35	R	Ashy Prinia	*Prinia socialis*	
36	R	Plain Prinia	*Prinia inornata*	
37	R	Common Tailorbird	*Orthotomus sutorius*	
38	M	Blyth's Reed Warbler	*Acrocephalus dumetorum*	
39	R	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	*Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*	
40	R	Purple-rumped Sunbird	*Leptocoma zeylonica*	

41	R	Purple Sunbird	*Cinnyris asiaticus*	
42	R	Scaly-breasted Munia	*Lonchura punctulata*	
43	R	House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*	
44	R	Baya Weaver	*Ploceus philippinus*	
45	R	Common Myna	*Acridotheres tristis*	
46	R	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*	
47	R	House Crow	*Corvus splendens*	
48	R	Indian Jungle Crow	*Corvus culminatus*	

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Sighting of Curlew Sandpiper in Hyderabad, 2nd October 2014

Nishant Shah

Curlew Sandpiper (Photo: Nishant Shah)

On the evening of 2nd October, I had gone to Ameenpur Lake to see if the waders had arrived yet. The reeds dotting the edge of the main lake used to be a good place to spot birds like Coots, Moorhens, Grebes and occasionally the Yellow Bittern. But to my dismay, the clump of reeds had been cleared away.

Fearing that the small birds will take flight at the slightest disturbance, I crawled my way to get a closer look at the winter guests along the edges of the lake. I spotted the regular waders like Common Greenshank, Common Redshank, Wood Sandpipers, Common Sandpipers, Black-winged Stilts, Little Ringed Plovers and Little Stints. There were also the resident Great Egrets and Little Egrets and, in the distance, a pair of Glossy Ibises.

Among a mixed flock of Little Stints, Common Sandpipers and Egrets I saw 4 rather large waders that I felt resembled Curlew Sandpipers. The whole flock was busy feeding in the shallow waters, and I took a photograph for the record.

Back home, I referred to my field guide for their distribution and, not finding them in and around Hyderabad, I posted the picture on Indian Birds Facebook group where the ID was confirmed as Curlew Sandpiper. The birds were not sighted the next day and the week thereafter.

Inputs from Aasheesh Pittee and Humayun Taher revealed that the only previous record of Curlew Sandpipers from around Hyderabad dates way back to 14th Nov 1994. 6 individuals were reported from Shamirpet Lake by Kanniah and Ganesh.

Documenting these migrants again after 20 years is quite thrilling! In Bollywood style, truly, "Bees saal baad"!!

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Bird of the Month

Text and photos: Umesh Mani

Jungle Crow (*Corvus macrorhynchos*)

Jungle Crow
(Chennai, 28-08-2014)

Order: Passeriformes
Family: Corvidae
Genus: *Corvus*
Species: *C. macrorhynchos*
Size: 46-57 cm

Description &distribution: The Jungle Crow is a widely-distributed member of the Asian family of corvids. Like all crows, the Jungle Crow is predominantly black, with glossy black face, throat, wings and tail. Across the range, the 11 different sub-species show considerable variation in the colouration of the head, neck, shoulders and underparts, ranging from dark grey in some others to glossy black in the Indian sub-species. There is also significant variation in size and proportion – the sub-species of Japan and eastern China is larger than the carrion crow, whereas the sub-species of India and the south-western parts of its range is considerably smaller than the carrion crow. It has a large, heavy bill, with the upper mandible being visibly thick and arched, thus giving rise to its scientific name (*macro rhynchos* = large beak) and the other common name, Large-billed Crow.

The Jungle Crow is widespread from eastern Iran and Afghanistan across to eastern China, Japan and the Philippines, and southwards across south and south-east Asia. It is highly adaptable, and can survive on a wide variety of food sources, and therefore it is able to colonise new areas without too much difficulty. It is seen in woodland areas, parks and gardens, as well as cultivated areas and open country.

Behaviour: It is rather a bold species, especially during feeding, even entering apartment balconies (as seen above) if there is a prospect of food being available. It is very diverse in its feeding habits, taking food from trees or ground, garbage dumps, or even the edges of water bodies where it may find fish or crabs. It has been observed to tear open garbage bags to pick up food, and is also known to take wire hangers and the like for nest-building. The diet itself is very varied – in fact, the Jungle Crow seems to eat almost anything that appears edible, including lizards, fish, crabs, other crustaceans, fruit, and even cooked food. Its call is similar to the House Crow, but may be deeper and more resonant. It is territorial and may defend its territory vigorously during day; however, while roosting, the Jungle Crow is gregarious and roosts in communal roosts in large numbers going up to several hundreds and even thousands at major roost sites. The Jungle Crow is observed to follow linear dominance hierarchies while roosting.

Nesting: The Jungle Crow breeds generally from March to May, but in the plains, the birds may begin as early as December. The nest is a platform or shallow cup of sticks of erratic quality of construction, and may be lined with rags, fibre, grass roots, and any other similar material; the Jungle Crow has even been known to use wire. The nest is usually built in the fork of a tree, preferably in tall conifers like fir or pine. The typical clutch consists usually of four to five or, rarely, six or seven broadly-oval eggs, blue-green in colour, and having various blotches, speckles and streaks in dull reddish-brown, sepia or grey. The Asian Koel has been known to be a brood-parasite on the Jungle Crow.

Local name: The Jungle Crow is known as *'jungli kawwa'* or *'pahari kawwa'* in Hindi, '*mala kakki'* or *'nalla kakki'* in Telugu, *'andan kakkai'* or *'karun kakkai'* in Tamil and *'van kak'* in Sanskrit.

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Report – Visit to Kokapet Lake, 2nd November 2014

Humayun Taher

During a quick visit to Kokapet Lake on 2nd November, in the rocks around the lake, we saw the following species:

1. Blue Rock Thrush - adult female
2. Black Redstart - adult
3. Booted Eagle - 3 birds seen. One was observed stooping at prey and catching what appeared to be some species of rodent. The prey was eaten on the wing.
4. Grey Heron
5. Purple Heron
6. Asian Openbill Stork
7. Possible Wood Sandpiper
8. Black-winged Stilt
9. Painted Stork

I believe there is potential for good birding at this place. The nearby rocky hill and quarries are very good habitat for rock thrushes and owls. I have earlier seen Grey Francolin, Common Quail and Indian Peafowl in this area. I have not explored this place properly but, as it is very close to my office, I visit whenever I have a little bit of time in the evenings. The area is well worth a visit now and then. I have even seen a Jackal in the vicinity and there is every possibility that there may be civets, mongoose, etc in the area.

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